

The 9th International Aikido Federation Congress

The Path of Aikido and "Synchronization of Mind, Technique and Body" Practice: Control of Ki by Breathing Exercises

By Hiroshi Tada, 9 dan

National Olympics Memorial Youth Center
September 10, 2004

This document was originally written for lecturing the participants at the Aikikai summer trainings held in Switzerland and Italy. The document has been partially revised for today.

The Path of Aikido - Shingaku no Michi and Shinpo no Michi

The Japanese budo had made a profound impact on the Japanese culture during the 700 years of samurai politics. The samurais, especially from the Muromachi to Sengoku era (from the mid 14th century to the early 17th century), devoted themselves to unimaginably severe trainings. Moreover, due to the nature of martial arts being directly involved in the life and death of human beings, samurais deeply studied human psychology and learned the teachings and methods of Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism and Lao-tse to master the path of samurai.

However, with the establishment of the feudal system at the end of the peaceful Edo era (from the mid 18th century to 1868) after the Sengoku era, besides its practicality of technique trainings, budo becomes valued as a method for cultivating bushido which respects truth and spirit of loyalty, along with Shinto virtues, selflessness and purity of heart, and teachings of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. After entering the Showa era (1926 to 1988), budo became a method of cultivating loyalty and patriotism. This new aspect of budo left a widespread impression on the Japanese population. This is why many consider budo spirit as Confucian spirituality even today. This new aspect, generally referred to as "Shingaku no michi" (strict moral values) was developed to suit the needs of the time.

Besides this Confucian discipline, there is another path latent within budo throughout the ages. The hidden budo spirit, referred to as "Shinpo no michi" (the training of mind and spirit), is a rule based on the universal truth given to all people throughout the ages, which requires us to search for the method of refining and applying the force of life and to exert ability provided to us all by the universe at the highest level utilizing budo. "Shinpo no michi" is a rule that has developed from the method of philosophies such as Shinto, esoteric Buddhism, Zen and Lao-tse, and a path that has merged practical oriental philosophy, which practices meditation based on the premise that the body and mind are one entity, with martial arts. "Shinpo no michi" shows us how to maintain and apply the force of life based on the perspective of the Eastern view of the world and life. It is a path that flows through the heart and supports the view of the universe, life and technique that Japanese people hold today.

Irrespective of what kind of technique you are practicing, if you want to spend your life training to the extreme to further improve yourself and seek to acquire "synchronization of mind, technique and body," you should have a profound understanding of this "Shinpo no michi" and refine your skill.

The important point here is the difference between the Japanese traditional training method which values the "Shinpo no michi" and the training method of sports, physical exercises and competitive budos practiced in the west. Under oriental training method, budo is practiced as a method of "purifying martial arts," "moving meditation" and "moving zen," apart from

contest and power gap. Situations referred to as "unfettered mind" and "unity of spirit of zen and spirit of sword" naturally result from these training methods. These states are together a path to be utilized by all people not only in budo but also in every aspect of their life. Aikido is a path which practices "Shinpo no michi" in a modern way.

Interpretation of Technique

Here is my definition of technique: If human being is a big tree, technique is its branches and flowers. If you want a tree laden with fruits, it is important for you to watch closely of the root of that tree. Only trees that are taken good care of will have deep root, great trunk, branches and leaves that can produce masses of flowers and bear fruits. It may seem to be a roundabout approach for improving your "technique," but you must first accomplish a set of "mind and body" necessary for improving.

Different path consists of different principles. Therefore, after choosing what you want to master, you must thoroughly master its basic principles, take time to practice them repeatedly and plant them deep inside your mind and body. What you need to be especially careful of from the very beginning is the two states that exist in your mind while training to master and exercise the technique. The denshos (technique scrolls) of budo strongly remind us not to engage in practices in which we might slide into a bad habit of letting the partner or object captivate our mind. At Shunpukan, Yamaoka Tesshu (1836 to 1888) had taught his students that "Fixing your mind means to open a suki (a break in composure and concentration)." This thought is too difficult for young budo beginners to comprehend when explained in words. Therefore, it is important that the instructors prepare a practice system that naturally leads those beginners to the correct way of practice. Now, explaining this thought to the general public will be even more difficult but Nakamura Tenpu Sensei (1876 to 1968) had given us an easily understandable explanation. The following figures show the difference between relative concentration and absolute concentration.

Object - Spirit Relative concentration: caught, fixed

The above figure shows a normal state of mind. In this situation, the object becomes the master and the mind becomes the slave. This result is yielded when your mind is caught by the object and consciousness towards the object arises and your mind gets fixed to it. In the above situation, it can be said that the mind is "facing and fostering enemies." In the densho, this state of mind is expressed as "staying, stopping and fixing" and reminds us to avoid the situation.

Object - Absolute concentration: dharana, dhyana, samadhi

In the above figure, just like the word of Chuang-tze (BC 369 to BC 286), "the mind of the sage is like a mirror which reflects of the entire universe," our mind is free from the object where the mind is the master and the object is the slave. This teaching was acquired through his experience in oriental meditation. In the above situation, your mind is always free, or "not facing or fostering enemies." This state of mind can only be acquired through practice. You must train your ki with breathing exercise, control your perception and practice meditation utilizing whatever method. The founder of Aikido, Ueshiba Morihei Sensei (1883 to 1969) said that "with movement is born skill" and "skill is created." These words teach us to clear our mind of conscious thought when practicing techniques, in order to have them naturally flow out from the bottom of our hearts at important moments. I believe that these words, including his other teaching, "Aikido is misogi (purification technique)," all are developed from the mental state of dhyanam. In the word of "Kongo Hannya Kyo," this teaching is described as "Free the mind without fixing it," which is popularly framed in Zen temples.

"Synchronization of Mind, Technique and Body" is not a principle only shared among people engaged in budo, art and sports. Skilled labors supporting their factories, doctors and researchers with excellent skills and top corporate managers all share the same principle. The synchronization of "mind, technique and body" is a word derived from the oriental teaching, the synchronization of "ki, mind and body" which is the result of synchronization of mind and

body.

Practicing Method

Practicing Aikido is just like going on a ride. The goal must be set before starting off. Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 to 1519) said, "When you plan to execute or experiment something, you must have a well-supported methodical theory. Person that executes and experiments without it is just like a boat drifting on the sea without a compass having no clue where to land."

In basic practices, a method that keeps the mind free from the object must be established. Practice methods following the Japanese tradition all teach their students to completely master the basic principles developing the techniques based on how we should maintain and apply our mind.

Agyu Jubei (1607 to 1650), the masterswordsman, once said that "the root of art of warfare lies in the understanding of the reason of the mind and its underlying principle. Therefore, the root of art of warfare is based on the training of mentality" in "Tsuki no sho." The following list, excerpt from the "Tsukimi sho," consists of 12 warnings by Yagyu Jubei.??

Beginners should avoid the following movements and habits listed.

The List of Bad Movements:

1. Letting your mind confront the enemy.
2. Dragging your feet.
3. Dull strike
4. Loose grip
5. Having doubts about the enemy.
6. Feeling restless by trying to hurry while having too much concentration on the details of the movements.
7. Breaking the rhythm.
8. Harboring anxiety.
9. Bending forward at the waist.
10. Feeling tense in the shoulders.
11. Tense body
12. Trying to look good.

Keep all 12 bad movements listed above firmly in mind. When a beginner fall into a bad habit, it will be difficult to correct. Practice to acquire a flexible mind.

The List of Good Movements:

1. Clear and sharp strike
 2. Speedy and dexterous footwork
 3. Having gracefulness in movement.
 4. Unconstrained movement
 5. Strong will to dedicate yourself in to trainings.
 6. Moving without hesitation.
 7. Relaxing body and having no tension.
 8. Natural, upright posture
 9. Relaxed shoulders
 10. Striking without rhythm.
 11. Having perfect control over your body.
 12. Having a free and pure mind.
- 12 items listed above are all good movements. When your mind is fixed, your movement becomes awkward. All bad habits are result of your mind being fixed.

Reference:

Shoden Shinkageryu by Yagyu Yoshinaga

Yagyu Shinkageryu Dogan by Yagyu Nobuharu

Shiryo Yagyu Shinkageyu (volume I and II) edited by Yoshio Imamura

Budo no Densho, "Budo" Nihon Budokan edited by Ichiro Watanabe

Important Factor in Starting the Practice

One of the most important parts in practice is controlling of ki by breathing exercises. To improve techniques and refine all of our activities to a higher level, we must first refine our force of life. Your success depends on your level of knowledge and skill in receiving the wisdom and power of the universe. For example, once, there was a person suffering an incurable disease. Since he did not give up and continued his breathing exercise at his Aikido lessons, he was able to cure the disease. These stories are not that uncommon.

To utilize the techniques at will, you must train your nerve throughout the body to naturally respond to the mind's request. Therefore, to synchronize the "mind, technique and body," mastering of the breathing exercise, which is the essence of training methods researched and experimented in India, China and Japan for thousands of years, is an indispensable training. In modern physiology taught in schools, the breathing exercise is explained as a method to take in oxygen and carry out carbon dioxide. The most important thing in oriental breathing exercise is the wonderful system of breathing that has evolved on earth. This breathing system is a method that enables us to refine our force of life to a higher plain by receiving the power of the root of the universe and its wisdom, ki throughout our nerve system. The breathing system is the root of our life. Many of our forerunners have mentioned the importance of daily ki training with breathing exercise. Toru Shirai (1783 to 1843), a famous swordsman in the Edo era, whom Katsu Kaishu (1823 to 1899) extolled by saying, "I've always wanted to become a good swordsman like you, but unfortunately, I couldn't," was one of them. Going through intensive trainings, Shirai damages his health. However, he makes a full recovery with the refinement training of Hakuinzenji (1685 to 1768) and opens up his own swordsmanship. Shirai said that "refinement and ki trainings are to be practiced by all people pursuing art." An interesting point of Hakuinzenji's breathing exercise is that this exercise is conducted just before going to bed when we are highly susceptible to suggestion.

Self, Mind and Body

The most important thing in practicing the Japanese traditional training method is to clearly understand the relationship of self, mind and body. Without understanding, the act of practice itself will not work out. In oriental philosophy, the "mind and body are equipments necessary to lead to the stage of upaya to enable the life of true self to survive the world of phenomena" and they must be skillfully controlled to promote complete exertion of their capability.

Regarding the relationship between the mind and body, the founder of Aikido, Ueshiba Morihei Sensei had explained to us to "understand the mind as a person under training and body as the dojo." When explaining to the general public, I would tell them to train themselves while considering the mind as a musician and body as an instrument. It is important for us to improve our skill as a musician while also working out our body (instrument) into a more accurate and sophisticated instrument.

The level of our keenness will probably improve infinitely according to the needs of time. It is well known that today's latest science and technology is supported by the manual labor of the skilled labors. For example, at a famous precision optical factory which one of my student (K of Aikido Kirenkai, Tokyo University) visited for his practical training, when manufacturing a new precision lens, the very first one is made by the hand of the skilled lens grinder based on the new blueprint. He told me how impressed he was to watch them complete their micro-level job only with their hands. The equipment that the skilled labors are using is the same equipment that was used a hundred years ago. The standard error of the lens described in the instruction manual provided by the company is only 0.05 micron.

Kan no Kenkyu written by Ryo Kuroda, published from Iwanami Shoten, used to be an essential book for those practicing budo. The sequel to this book includes a section writing about the character 振, pronounced "ki." The meaning of the character 振 leads to the meaning of the character 振, which is also pronounced "ki." 振 expresses the situation of a ball which is trying to bounce off from the floor at the moment it reaches the floor. 振 expresses the moment of the arrow leaving the bow. Each character expresses extremely subtle motion

taking place instantly. To capture these moments, we must be prepared to respond to them. For example, the following report on microscopic writing research shows the capability of human being acquiring a mind and body that can respond to subtle movements by experiencing specific job and training.

The result of the experiment, conducted by the Department of Science, University of Kyoto, was announced in "Seirigaku Kenkyu," vol. 10 in 1935 by Sosen Miyake. In the experiment, at first, Miyake wrote 1,000 kanji characters inside the square centimeter frame using Japanese ink and brush within 2 or 3 hours. Then, he wrote out 100 poems of Hyakunin Isshu, an anthology of 100 poems by 100 different poets, and drew the portrait of each poet in color within a square, 15 mm a side. As a result, he was able to complete his tasks in 5 hours. In the report, Miyake says that he makes the tip of the brush naturally write out the characters by gazing at the tip of the brush, holding it still and drawing an image of character between the paper and the eyes. Although there are differences between individuals, the report shows us that the more we train ourselves, the more we become capable of exhibiting amazing ability.

"Synchronization of Mind, Technique and Body," an Ideal Situation for Human Being

Aikido is a budo that was developed and studied in the Showa era. Originally, Aikido was a practical martial art for effectively beating opponents in the battlefield. However, today, Aikido overcomes the killing, destruction, confrontation and competition that it had experienced in the frontlines of the big wars. Aikido is "a budo for the modern period" having the objective to make a positive contribution (progress and improvement of the universe) through mutual training of ki, mind and body based on the Japanese traditional concept, "Banyusoai" (the love completes the whole universe), and the spirit of Yamato (the country name of ancient Japan which means to have harmony among all people). Today, many people from many countries are in sync with the spirit of Aiki.

Practice

1. Lesson for drawing in and tightly closing your anus
2. Controlling by breathing exercise
 - A. Kokyu soren
 1. Kokyu in the morning
 2. Kokyu that activates the nerve system throughout the body
 3. Kokyu that vibrates life and raises the level of life power
 4. Kokyu that stimulate the costal and respiratory muscles and increase breath power
 5. Kokyu that increases breath power while expanding the chest
 6. Kokyu that promote blood circulation
 7. Kokyu for purification
 8. Kiai, or a shout delivered with strong Ki for the purpose of focusing all of one's energy
 - B. Breathing exercise in 6 sounds (a, i, u, e, o, un)
 - Voiced
 - Voiced - Unvoiced
 - Unvoiced
 - C. Breathing exercise for training "tanden" (the focal point of the body's energy)
 - Upper tanden
 - Middle tanded
 - Lower tanden
 - D. Breathing exercise that spreads "Ki" throughout the body
 - E. Breathing in unison

The spirit of martial arts in the present age, and its use

Hiroshi Tada

@ 2003 Aikikai d'Italia
www.aikikai.it

What follows is the transcript of the two talks held by Tada Hiroshi Sensei during the 2002 International Aikido Summer Gathering in La Spezia, Italy. The talks were delivered in Japanese and translated into Italian by Asuka Ozumi. The intervention of an interpreter accounts for the fact that the recorded text alternates between the first and third person. The explanatory notes and all additional information are supplied by the editors of the periodical Aikido published by Aikikai d'Italia, the Italian branch of Aikikai So Hombu. Aikikai d'Italia holds the copyright of the lectures. Insertions in square brackets were added to clarify the text where necessary, and to signal omissions where the recording is unintelligible.

translation from the italian version

<http://www.aikikai.it/riviste/3401/htm/TadaConfEng.htm>

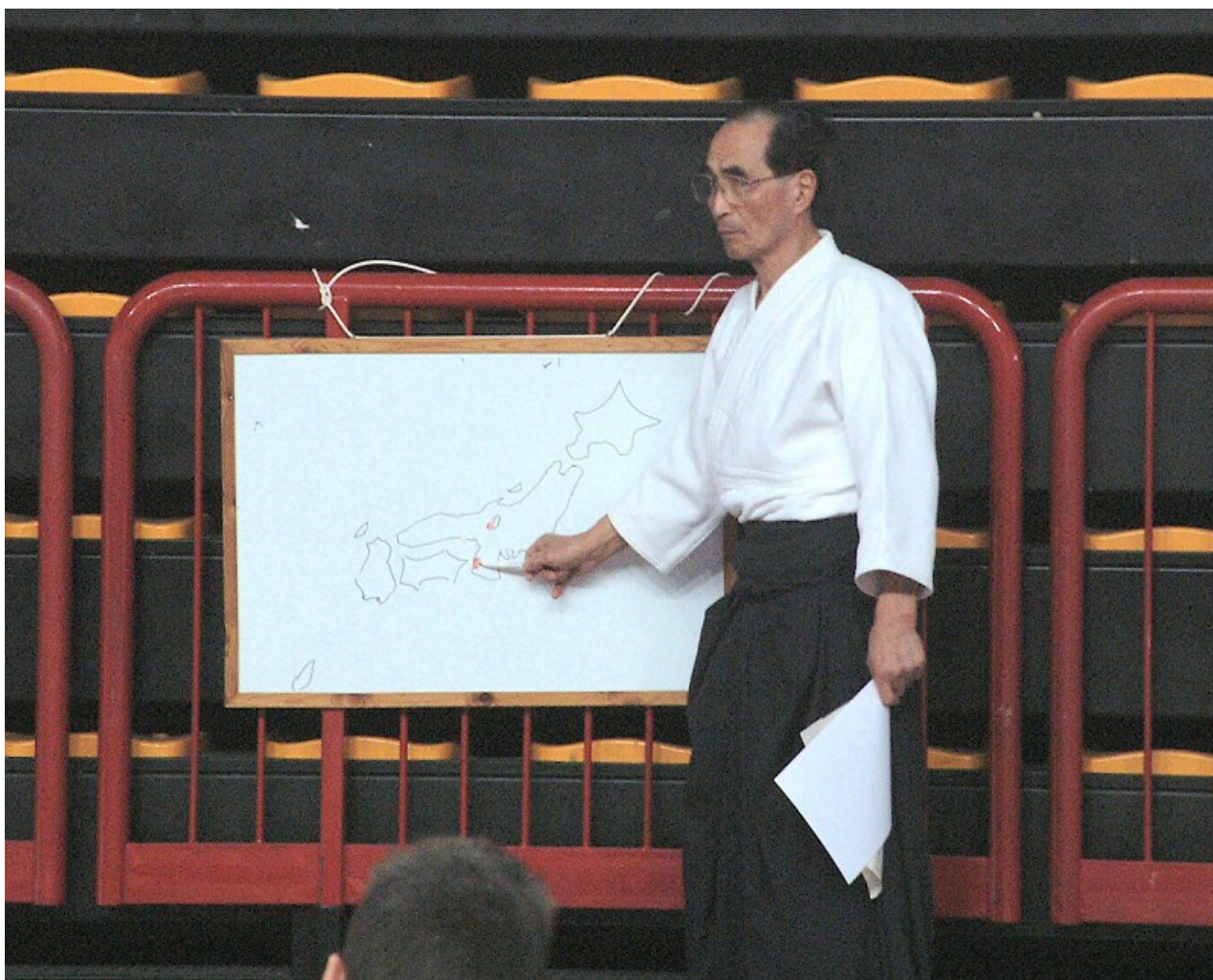


§

In March this year Tada Sensei delivered a lecture at the *Nippon Budokan* in Tokyo for a group of scholars concerned with Japanese culture. Today's lecture takes up some of the issues he dealt with in March. The argument of the lecture was: 'The spirit of martial arts in the present age, and its use'. Tada Sensei is an Aikido specialist, and today's lecture will mostly focus on the spiritual aspects of Aikido. [At the conference in Japan] Tada Sensei opened with some of the stories told him by his father, and successively spoke of the method for the unification of mind and body developed by *Nakamura Tempu Sensei*. [However] it is the conviction of

Tada Sensei that those who practice Aikido should in the first place have some knowledge of the life of Ueshiba Sensei.

Ueshiba Sensei was born in the town of Tanabe (in the district of Wakayama) in 1883. Three figures stand out for the influence they exerted in his life. In the first place there is the Buddhist monk *Fujimoto Mitsujo* by whom Ueshiba Sensei, from an early age, received an education based on the Chinese classics. At the age of thirty-two Ueshiba Sensei met the *daito-ryu* master *Takeda Sokaku*, and some years later, at thirty-five, he had the first encounter with the reverend *Deguchi Onisaburu*, who instead was a representative the *Shinto* faith. Aikido practitioners generally believe the reverend *Deguchi* to have had the strongest influence on Ueshiba Sensei, though that is inaccurate. The person to have most influenced Ueshiba Sensei, fundamentally, is the first of the three mentioned, *Fujimoto Mitsujo*, for reasons I am about to explain. As I've just said this first teacher of Ueshiba Sensei was a Buddhist monk, and a member of the Japanese *Shingon* Buddhist sect .



Tada indicates on a map the position of Tanabe, in which Ueshiba Morihei was born

For the understanding of Aikido, knowledge of the history of martial arts alone is insufficient; it is also necessary to have at least a basic notion of the cultural history of Japan. Starting from, approximately, ten-thousand b.C., the unfolding of Japanese history is divided into great periods: the first in order is the *Jomon* period, then *Yayoi*, *Kofun* ^[1], *Asuka*, *Nara*, and *Tempyo* ^[2], then comes the *Kamakura* period in which the *Samurai* emerge with force. At the beginning of the *Tempyo* period (the penultimate I mentioned), two fundamental figures in Japanese Buddhism emerge, *Saicho* ^[3] e *Kukai* ^[4]. Ever since the *Nara* period China had been the source of innovations in Japanese culture. Scholars were as a consequence frequently sent to China from Japan in order that they may study with the great

local figures. In 802 A. D. *Saicho* and *Kukai* left for China to study. The latter was a particularly gifted student, and in only six months was able to have a perfect knowledge of Sanskrit.



Kobo Daishi (Kukai)

On return from their journey to China *Saicho* and *Kukai* imported to Japan the most innovative current in Chinese Buddhism, namely esoteric Buddhism. *Kukai* in particular had been initiated to Yoga *mantras* by the master *Huigo* ^[5]. Back in Japan *Saicho* and *Kukai* established Buddhist schools: *Saicho* founded a monastic complex on *Mount Hiei*, near *Kyoto*; ^[6] *Kukai* founded of a monastery on mount *Koya* ^[7]. Both monasteries were founded under the patronage of the Emperor. Both monasteries became important cultural centres in Japan. The place of birth of Ueshiba Sensei is nearby one of them [the *Kongobu-ji* (Diamond Peak) monastery founded by *Kukai* on mount *Koya*], as is shown on this map. For this reason, and given the close geographical proximity [to the temple], it is said that from an early

age Ueshiba Sensei took a great interest in the personality of *Kukai*, who fascinated him.



This map of Japan shows: Tanabe (birthplace of Ueshiba Morihei), Hiei (seat of the monastery founded from Saicho), Koya (seat of the monastery founded by Kukai), Tokyo (from 1932 seat of Aikido Hombu Dojo), Iwama (from 1942 circa seat of Aiki-Jinja), Shirataki (in which Ueshiba M. met the master Takeda Sokaku) e Ayabe (seat of the sect Omoto-kyo of O. Deguchi)

As we have said the name of that Buddhist sect is *Shingon*: *Shingon Mikkyo*. *Shingon* means ‘mantra’ ^[8], mikkyo ^[9] means ‘yoga’: thus the two monks brought to Japan what at that time was the most elevated form of spiritual contemplation.

Kukai came to be an extremely innovative figure who greatly influenced Japanese culture and therefore martial arts too. His influence is very much alive to this day. On the weapons and armours used in martial arts one finds *mantras* engraved in Sanskrit. However, a more precise account of the way in which *Kukai* is still an influential figure in Japanese culture would take up a very long time.



Japanese armour, Edo period (XVIII century) with a bronze sanskrit inscription
(bonji) applied to the cuirass; the 12 gods are represented in silver
(Musées Royaux de Bruxelles)

The word *Aikido*, just as the word *Judo*, contains this syllable, **do**, meaning *way*, *path*. There are, properly speaking, two kinds of path. There is in the first place an ethical path, *shindaku*, which is embodied in *Bushido*, and dates back to, approximately, the 17th century – a relatively modern age. This kind of path devotes special attention to the teachings of *Confucius*. The second kind of path, *Shinpo*, is directed at the perfection of technique and consequently includes practices of spiritual concentration. The fundament of this latter path is to be found in the teachings which *Saicho* and *Kukai* brought to Japan, consisting, as we have said, of *mikkyo* (esoteric Buddhism) and *Zen*. The single term *path* which is employed in our time relates back to two separate paths entwined as though they were one. People probably believe that only the first path, the path of *Bushido*, represents the path of *Budo*, the path of martial arts. There is a reason for this.

In 1867, following the *Meiji restoration*, a new government settled in. Under this new government, which keenly followed the course of the more developed Western nations, founded on Christian beliefs, it was decided that Japan would also be founded anew following the principles of a single faith, namely *Shinto*. Until that time Buddhism and Shinto had formed a kind of unity in Japan, but they were clearly segregated in 1868. At that time the persecution of the Buddhists began. The areas most strongly hit by the persecution were the ones in which *mikkyo* had most taken hold and which were thus traditionally most tied to yoga. Everything which had to do with the second kind of path was then materially wiped out, and was thus also erased from people's minds. For this reason whenever one mentions *Budo* nowadays people only discern the first path within it, the ethical path, and not the path of spiritual principles and perfection; thus it comes about that martial arts have become a practice which is undertaken as a sport [and nothing more].



This attitude intensified during the war and is becoming stronger and stronger. If we go backwards in time, for instance to the *Tokugawa* period, we find that the two paths generally have pronounced distinguishing traits. The first kind of path, founded on the teachings of Confucius, places strong emphasis on hierarchy, respect and devotion towards one's superiors. On the contrary the second path, founded on Zen Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism, is based on the teachings of *Lao Tze* and *Chuang Tze*, according to whom all individuals are treated as equals and for whom the communion of humans and nature, in the form of an ultimate naturalism, is the final objective. In Japanese culture these two paths, these two separate respects, are amalgamated as though they were facets of a unity. At this point we may go back to Ueshiba Sensei.

As said, Ueshiba Sensei received the teachings of *mikkyo* esoteric Buddhism from an early age. At the age of thirty-five he met the reverend *Deguchi Onisaburo*, and in both cases we have instances of individuals who were followers of the second path. For what concerns Japanese *Shinto* it should be stressed that it took two distinct forms: the first is an ancient cult which originated within the Imperial court, the second is a popular cult. The reverend *Deguchi* belongs to the latter form of Shintoism.

When we therefore think of O Sensei we should consider the influence of these two fundamental figures, who were followers of the second path, and both of whom exerted their influence on the development of Aikido. The issue becomes at this point extremely complex in that *mikkyo* esoteric Buddhism is derived from teachings based on ancient Chinese texts, whereas the teachings of the reverend *Deguchi Onisaburo* belong to the Shinto tradition, which also has a long tradition behind it. There is, therefore, a problem of interpretation. It is extremely difficult to pursue in-depths studies in this area, even at an institutional level. A further problem is posed by the contemporary interpretation of the study of esoteric Buddhism and ancient Shinto. In the contemporary world there is a tendency to leave such questions untouched and to avoid close examinations.

I will now say some things about myself. When I first entered the Dojo of Ueshiba Sensei there only were six or seven disciples, divided into two groups. The first group was imparted the teachings of *Nishi Sensei*, whose training and interests were in medicine. The second group was instead taught by *Tempu Sensei*. My *sempai* introduced me to *Tempu Sensei*, and I will now tell you what kind of a person he was. He was born in 1876 to the *Tachibana* family: this was a family of influential landowners. He learnt martial arts at an early age; in 1902 he joined the military and took part in the war between Russia and Japan.

At the end of that war *Tempu Sensei* suddenly began expectorating blood and was only granted a three-month life expectancy by his doctors. Until that time he had never feared death, but he suddenly found himself facing such fear, to his surprise. In an attempt to recover the strength and self-assurance he once owned he embarked on a long course of studies. As the son of an influential family he had contacts within the medical sphere and was personally acquainted with many medics, though none seemed to be able to improve his condition. Under a false Chinese name *Tempu Sensei* travelled to the United States in order to enrol at Columbia University to read medicine, and graduated. He then went on to Europe, where he became acquainted with the greatest personalities in the medical world. However, he did not also find a solution of any effect, and decided to return to Japan and await death. On the route back home, though, he made the encounter with a *yogi* whose name was *Kaliapa* ^[10]

Kaliapa diagnosed a lung polyp, and invited *Tempu* to follow him on Mount *Kanchenjunga* in the Himalayas ^[11]. *Tempu Sensei* spent three years there following the teachings of the *yogi*, and in the course of this period the illness disappeared. At

the end of the three years he decided to return to Japan where he was also met with a certain success on a social level; however he decided to lend his help to those in need, and founded the 'Association for the Unification of Body and Spirit'. Because of his medical training in the United States *Tempu Sensei* was at once a doctor and a philosopher. He decided, among other things, to divulge oriental philosophies, which are fairly enigmatic, in simple terms, in contemporary terms. Some of his disciples went on to be prime ministers, military commanders, and there are some who are members of the Imperial Court: all of them are most famous individuals in Japanese history.

The teachings of *Tempu Sensei* are grounded on *karma yoga* and *hatha yoga*. By following his teachings one may learn to adopt in life, in contemporary life, the fundamentals of *shinpo*, i.e. the path which leads to spiritual principles, the path of spiritual concentration. The teachings of *Tempu Sensei* explain how to educate and how to impart further teachings in the contemporary age. His teachings include valuable contributions which are not only valid in the practice of Aikido but especially for the elevation of each person's vital energy, and are applicable to every-day life.

If we take the teachings of *Tempu Sensei* as a departure point we find there is an obvious need for a contemporary study not just of the history of martial arts; rather, there is need for studies of martial arts in connection with the cultural history of Japan. The teachings of *Tempu Sensei* provide an answer to questions such as how to improve oneself, how to attain a desired objective. In Europe and in many parts of the world there are debates as to how natural abilities may be developed; this kind of investigation finds an answer in the teachings of *Tempu Sensei* and in the principles of *hatha yoga*. An understanding of these issues also provides a key to the complex teachings of Ueshiba Sensei, particularly for what concerns those elements in his terminology which belong to traditional Shinto.

It is important to understand that we are not dealing simply with thoughts, with intellectual considerations, but with principles to be acted upon. It is extremely important, it is necessary, to perceive that there are two forms of training: training the mind, training thought and training perception, and not only the body. These two issues have to be appreciated in their fundamental aspects. One should be not concerned with how able one is, how capable; it is more important to cultivate the fundamentals, and to have a good initial understanding. This is because – says Tada Sensei – a teaching is somewhat like a train in its movement: what counts is the mode of departure [how to catch the train], not the departure point.

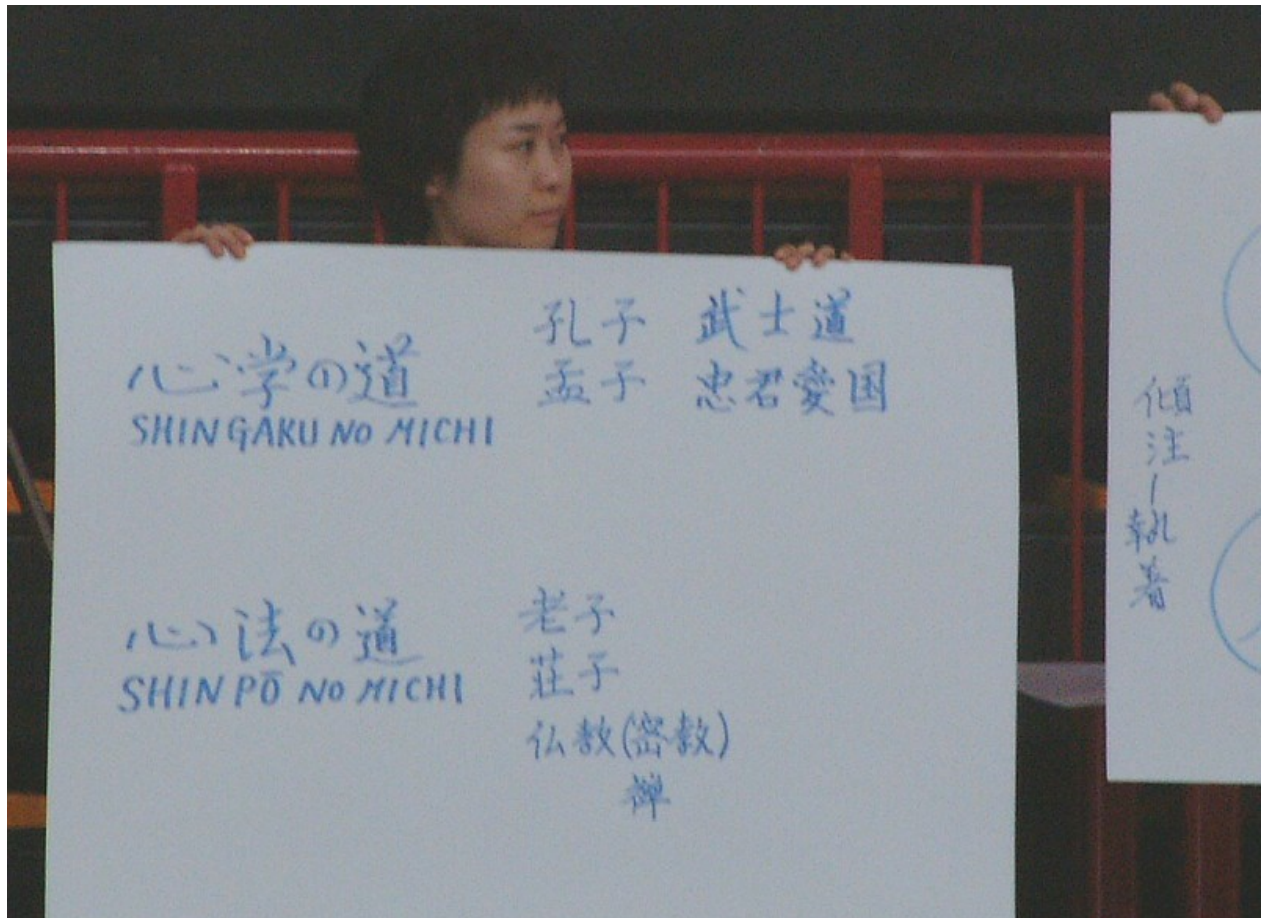
We have talked about the two paths: the first concerns ethics, and is more or less understandable to all. We should rather turn to consider the second path, that of *shinpo* and spiritual Buddhism, which ties up with Zen Buddhism, *mikkyo* Buddhism, the teachings of the Chinese philosophers *Lao Tze* and *Chuang Tze*: the teachings to be learnt on this path lead beyond antagonism. Not only the antagonism between oneself and the others, between oneself and the outside, but

also the antagonism within ourselves. The word *Aikido* has the initial element *ai* which means *unification*. Without ridding oneself of antagonism one is not able to properly follow the path of Aikido. The rule is equally valid for what concerns the activity of the spirit as it is for the learning of technique.

From the body of literature which embodies the main elements we should stress the importance of two works: first of all the *lotus of sutra* and secondly a sixth-century text by the Chinese monk *Tendai* entitled *Makashikan* ^[12]. These texts are fundamental documents which contain all the relevant references for the *shinpo* path, the path of spiritual contents. Time, however, has run out; we will go into this at the next talk.

Lecture number two

We will now treat in further detail the issues dealt with yesterday, so as to make them clear to all. *Shingaku no michi* is the path of spiritual style and is the first of the paths mentioned yesterday, whereas *shinpo no michi*, the second of the two, is the path of spiritual rule. The name for each martial art bears the ideogram *do* ^[1], path: aikido, judo, kendo, karatedo, kyudo. [This word] means *path*.



If we consulted most Japanese today on the meaning of the term *path*, the answer would be related to the first meaning: the ethical path, the moral path. Such an answer derives from the social transformations which have occurred in Japan ever since the Meiji period, more or less a century ago^[2]. Truly speaking, though it may not be apparent, there are two paths: two paths which intersect and join each other to form a single path.

The first path, the path of the study of the spirit has a grounding in the teachings of *Confucius* and *Nancho*. This first path materialised as *Bushido* in the *Tokugawa* period, the period in which nation states originated. The *Bushido* of the age of the *Samurai* metamorphosed in more recent times as nationalism and in the backing of

Imperial power. ^[3] Such an image has a strong hold on Japanese culture and for this reason the average Japanese person tends to reduce, if asked, everything to do with the notion of *path* to the first meaning. Whether or not we are able to perceive it there is a second path in Japanese culture: *Shinpo no michi*, the Path of Spiritual Rule. ^[4]

This latter path is far more ancient, and dates back to an age before *Bushido*. This path is devoted to the study of the nature of human existence, and brings out the energy with which each individual is endowed. *Lao Tze* and *Chuang Tze* prepared the grounds for this doctrine, which gives fundamental importance to the energy which operates in nature. Truly, ever since the most ancient times (and we are talking therefore of a legendary age), *shinpo* has manifested itself.

Shinto permeates all, the universe and human beings, but cannot be captured in words. We said yesterday there are two great currents within Shinto: official Shinto, the national religion, generated the Imperial cult. Next is the *Minzoku Shinto*, a popular current which has existed for two-thousand years and accumulates shinto and buddhism. It is not however legitimate to subdivide Shinto into two paths, because Shinto permeates both currents.

At the roots of the second path, the path of *shinpo*, alongside the Chinese philosophers *Lao Tze* and *Chuang Tze* we find Buddhism, and particularly the esoteric Buddhist currents, namely *mikkyo* and Zen Buddhism. About fifteen-hundred years ago in Japan, in the age we yesterday mentioned under the name *Tempyo*, the political world took Buddhism into great account and this resulted in a great consideration towards human beings. This is most truly manifested in the figurative arts of the time; to this day, in Japan, one may admire the Buddhist statuary which belongs to those times.



The *Tempyo* period lasted more or less four-hundred years, and for three-hundred and fifty years or so within that period death penalties were abolished in Japan. Today the European Union is pursuing the same objective... Again, we said yesterday that the monks *Saicho* and *Kukai* who brought *mikkyo* esoteric Buddhism from China - the most advanced form of Buddhism of the time, based on the principles of yoga – lived during the *Tempyo* period.

We also mentioned yesterday that Ueshiba Sensei ever since his youth trained under the principles of *Shingon mikkyo* - *shingon* esoteric Buddhism - and followed the teachings of the *yogi* [Fujimoto Mitsujo]. Ueshiba Sensei made the first encounter with *Takeda Sensei*, from whom he received his training in *Daito ryu*, at the age of thirty-two and at thirty-five met the reverend *Deguchi Onisaburo*, who taught him the fundamentals of the ancient Shinto tradition. Although, therefore, Shinto terminology is to be found in the teachings of Ueshiba Sensei it is important to relate it to those teachings of his youth which were grounded in yoga and Buddhism. The tomb and mausoleum of Ueshiba Sensei are placed in the Buddhist temple of *Kohanji*, a temple of the *Shingon* sect, where his forebears are also buried.

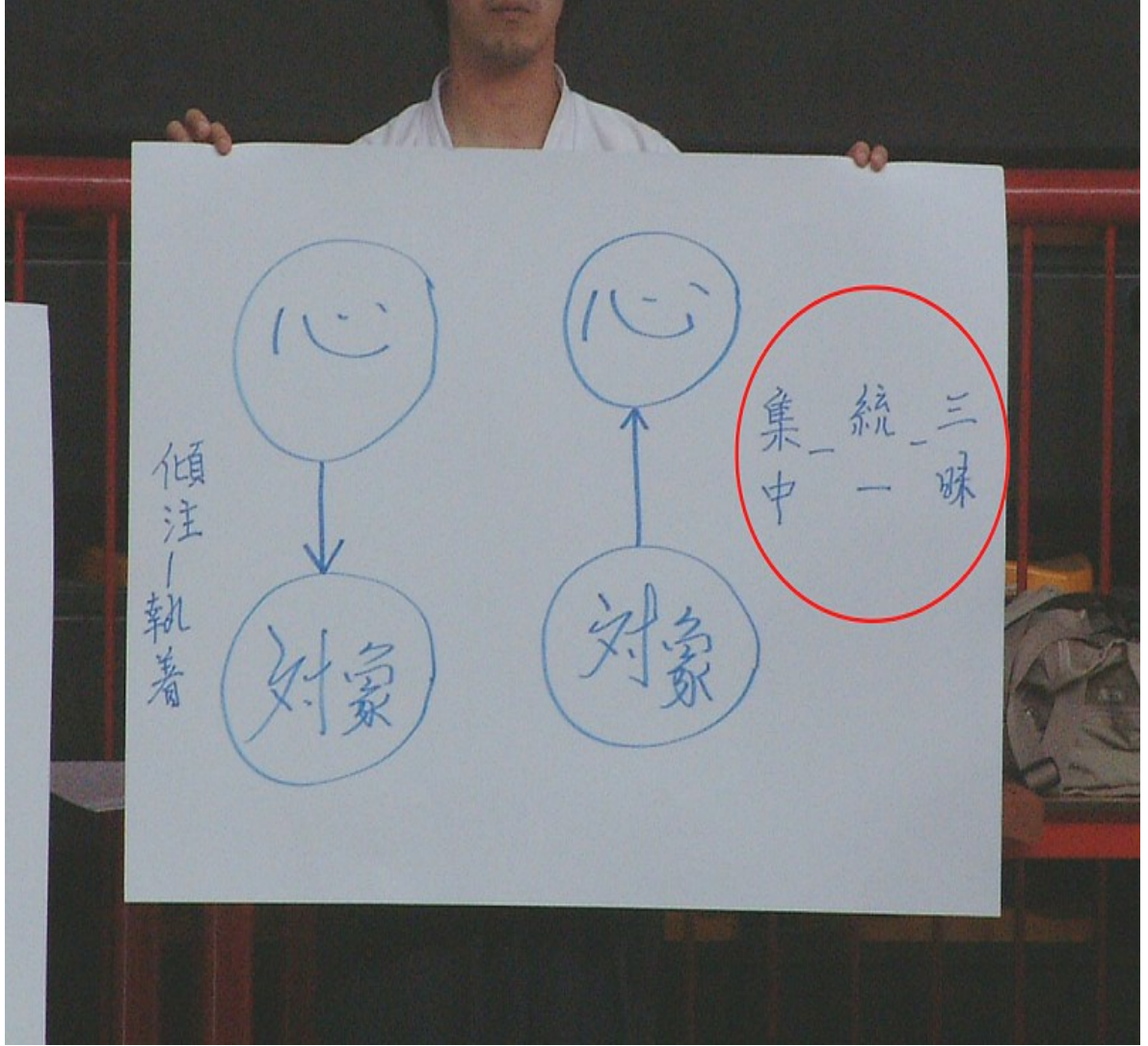


The tomb and mausoleum of Ueshiba Morihei, in the temple of Kozanji.

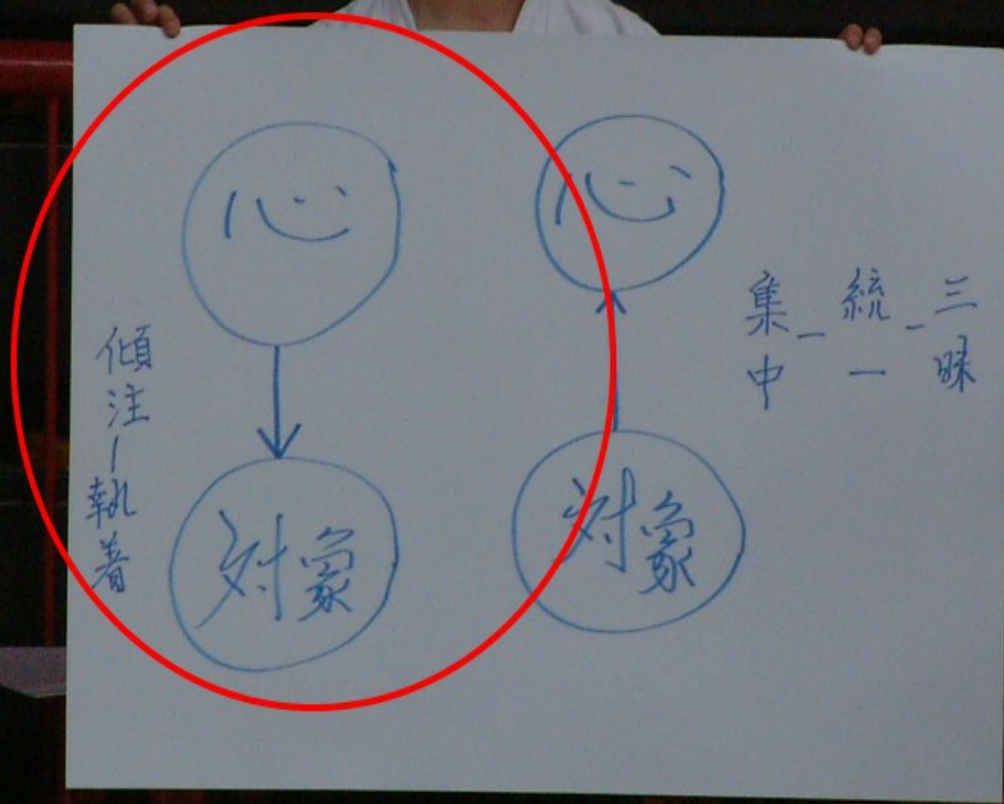
Mikkyo esoteric Buddhism, which has permeated Japanese culture, contributed to traditional martial arts techniques of spiritual concentration without which there would not have been the further development in martial arts we may find today. Zen Buddhism is another form of Buddhism which proved influential in the evolution of martial arts. Zen Buddhism flourished in Japan during the *Kamakura* period, when the *samurai* went to power, and continued to be influential successively during the *Muromachi* period, during the *Sengoku* period of the *Warring States*, and on into the *Tokugawa* period.

Why did Zen flourish under the *samurai*? The fundamental belief in Zen practice is that enlightenment may be achieved by the individual alone, and this manner of thinking struck the samurai class in particular. What is Zen? Zen is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit word *viana* from the *yogic* vocabulary. I have explained this many times in the course of the *Kinorenma*, which has been held periodically

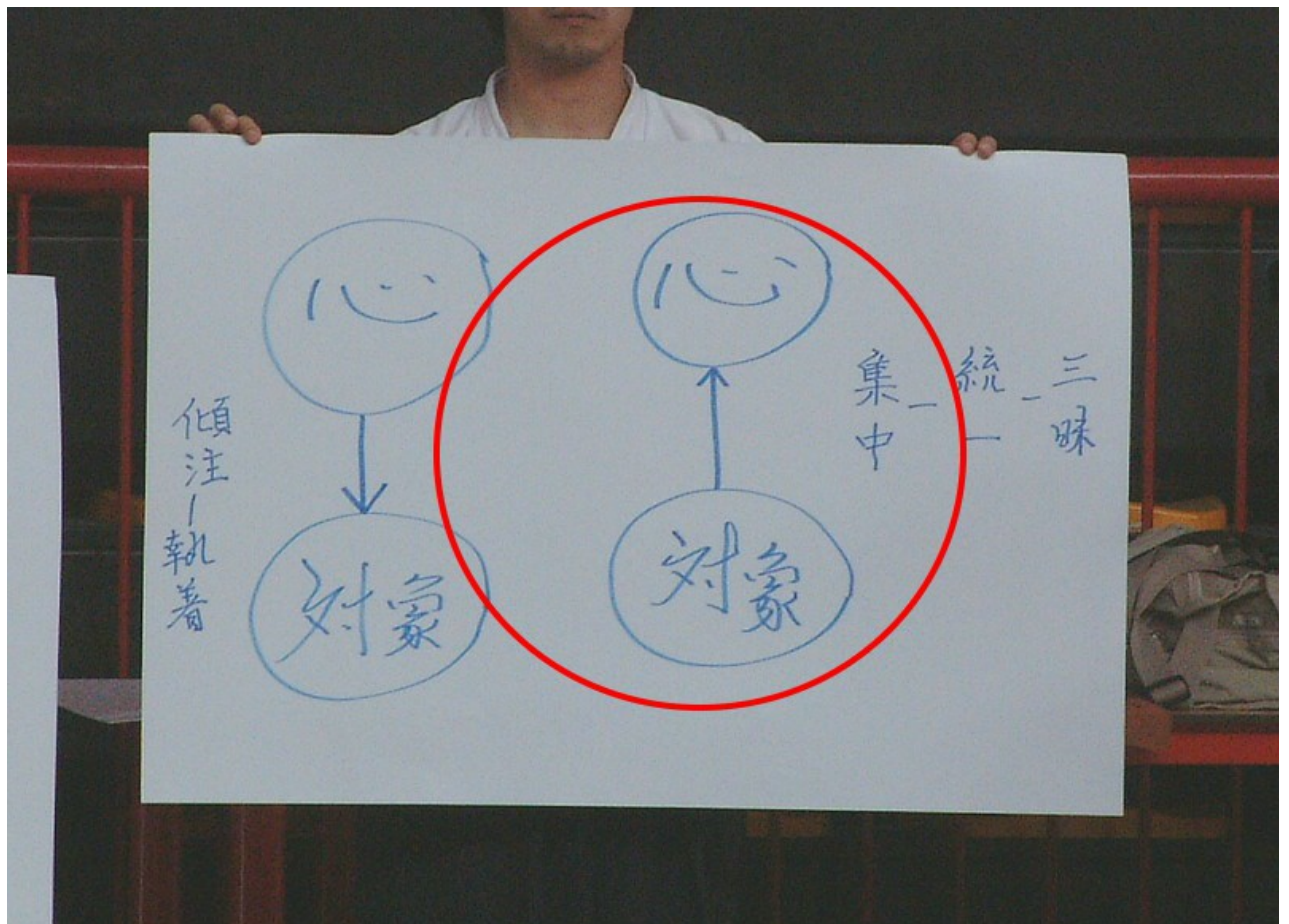
in Italy in the course of the years. Quoting the Sanskrit, from *arana*, *viana*, *samadi*.
[see the board which during the talk was in sight of the audience].



These concepts are of extreme importance and it is not sufficient that they be understood intellectually; they also require practice ... For this reason I will give them for the first time full explanation. The soul, the spirit [above] is connected with the object; you can see the arrow:



Takuan Soho, a *yogi*, held that the spirit which can stand still is a spirit which moves. The spirit dwells on an object, and, by being still, it moves. Consequently a spirit that cannot stand still, is a spirit incapable of movement. What kind of a thing is a spirit that is able to stand still and move? For instance, when an enemy attacks, if the spirit is able to focus on the enemy, it can elaborate the situation-dynamics, consider how to elude the attack and be ready for counter-attack. This happens daily in our lives. The spirit, under the influence of the object, is subject to irritation, commotion, agitation. What happens in martial arts happens in our everyday life, alike. By the exercise of the spirit we can attain the state which is outlined in this following sketch:



Saicho claimed in ancient times that in order to apprehend universal laws one must be absolutely clear, like a mirror. In the first sketch, the *object* is the main actor and the *spirit* is in a state of dependence. When we reach the second state the *spirit* becomes the main actor and the *object* becomes dependant as if it were a proper logical form, a chain of objects. Ever since ancient times, at the beginning of history, people have striven to reach the second state. This objective is clearly the fundament of our religion. We need this in order to surpass a *Weltanschauung* founded on antagonism. In ordinary conditions, as in the first sketch, spirit and object antagonise each other, they are detached, and never attain unity.

In Japanese this condition is named *kei chu*, where *kei* means 'to turn to', and *chu* means 'to pay attention'. *Socho*, the second state, denotes in Japanese the mental concentration which leads to convergence, unity. When we reach that level this process is connected to *Socho*, then we have *zanmai*, which in Sanskrit is *samadi*. Unity, i.e. that which in Sanskrit is named *viana*, the Japanese call *Zen*. The term was first imported to China, where it became *chan*, and from China to Japan, where it changed to *Zen*. There is an expression in Japanese, *ken zen ni jo*, which I will now explain. *Ken* means 'sword', whereas *zen* is obviously 'Zen'. The idea is that we undertake the path of the sword in order to reach the Zen path, or vice versa. The path of the sword and the Zen path are very much alike in that when one handles the sword there comes a point when without effort - as an absolute automatism, just like a mirror - one sees the enemies, perceives the moment they are moving against us. In Zen, likewise, the spirit perceives the objects without.

Since the overcoming of antagonisms is the main thing, it was clear to all that the Zen path and the path of the sword were the same thing; that the objective was the state of emptiness, the state without spirit. The same holds in Aikido. Ueshiba Morihei Sensei maintained the same principles, but expressed himself in ancient Shinto terminology which is now more or less impossible to translate and which I have tried to render in simpler words.

Shinto practice, Buddhist practice and the *Taoist* practise of *Lao Tze* and *Chuang Tze* have been amalgamated in Japan. The reverend *Deguchi Onisaburo* taught the principles of ancient Shinto which before him were studied by *Hirata Atsutane* ^[5] in the *Tokugawa* period. *Hirata* is an extremely important scholar of ancient Shinto. If, however, we turn to the works of *Hirata* we find that he too [also] recommends Zen Buddhism breathing exercises for their efficacy. Ever since the *Tempyo* period Buddhism and Shinto have had a strong link between them. Fundamentally Shinto is a quest for purity: spiritual purity and purity of the individual human being. There are very few written texts, but Shinto is ultimately a non rational practice, a practice devoid of reasoning, and for such reason he [Hirata] has always referred, in its history, back to Indian thought.

It is not important for us contemporaries to dwell on what Shinto is, and what Buddhism is instead, or *Shinpo* or esoteric Buddhism: one must not, in any way,

get lost in such detail. It is essential instead that one have an organic perception and a global view-point with an aim to self improvement. To us contemporaries it [the rest] is all the same.

Towards the end of yesterday's talk I spoke of *sutra Yoga* and *Makashinkan*; the latter was written by the Chinese monk *Tendai*. *Sutra Yoga* dates back two-thousand years, the writings of *Tendai* are about fifteen-hundred years old. The book by the monk *Tendai*, *Makashinkan*, is currently available with sufficient ease in Japanese bookshops, but it is an extremely difficult book to interpret and there is practically no one who still reads it today. The reason for this is that the book was written in the classical Chinese of fifteen centuries ago, whereas Japanese readers attempt an interpretation in terms of Japanese grammar, which makes for laborious reading. There is also another book by *Tendai*, *Shoshikan* ^[6], which was written at the time when all *samurai* were able to read. This book has also been translated into European languages. In translation the title reads more or less as follows: 'Introduction to *viana* for beginners'. *Viana* means 'zen', 'unity'. The methodology presented in the book is sufficiently precise, and draws on both Indian and Chinese Zen.

At the offset of one's training the spirit must aim at a condition of quiet and firmness. The Japanese expression for such a condition is *shin kai kan kai*, which corresponds to the Sanskrit *viana miana*. As in all religions there is a preliminary issue of establishing certain principles, of defining objectives, and determining which things must absolutely be avoided. For instance not to kill, not to steal, not to lie. Religions also prescribe things such as adoration of the God, where there is one, love towards the other, towards one's neighbour; such precepts give grounding to a firm spirit. Thirdly one always finds instructions for training the body so as to make it conform to the will of the spirit. A problem arises here, on the point of making the body conform to the will of the spirit. For instance the channelling of energy in what is generally known as *pranayama*. We, for instance, attract energy under five distinct modalities. We do not live alone, we live by virtue of the energy in the universe: the sun, firstly, water, earth, food, air. These are the five modalities for gathering energy, and 85% of it comes through breathing.

It is of utmost importance therefore to explain the fundamentals of breathing techniques. We all have learnt the small and great breathing systems, inspiring the oxygen which reaches the lungs through the vascular system, and from there enters the blood stream and goes on to the blood. This is, so to speak, the western medical explanation, but sages from Japan and China are certain of another form of breathing. According to them, human beings, at this stage of the evolutionary process, breathe not only oxygen through their organs; what they mainly absorb in breathing is the energy in the universe. When we take the great force of the universe into our organism, we also take in the soul of the universe, the wisdom of the universe, the will of the universe, and this is the great discovery of Eastern sages. In contemporary terms we may compare this process to that of a huge battery which continually recharges itself.

The energy received from the universe accumulates internally in the area we call *tanden*, another Sanskrit word, which is a kind of vast nucleus related to the psyche. The nucleus in which the energy of the universe accumulates is a pivotal part in the study of martial arts. When this nucleus is violently stimulated it can disperse all the energy accumulated and this seriously endangers the very life of the organism. We shall now look at what should be made a part of our breathing in order to accumulate the energy. If our vital energy is low the consequences fall back on our self control and compromise our spirit. Earlier we explained the difference between relative concentration, the first type and the second type of concentration [absolute].

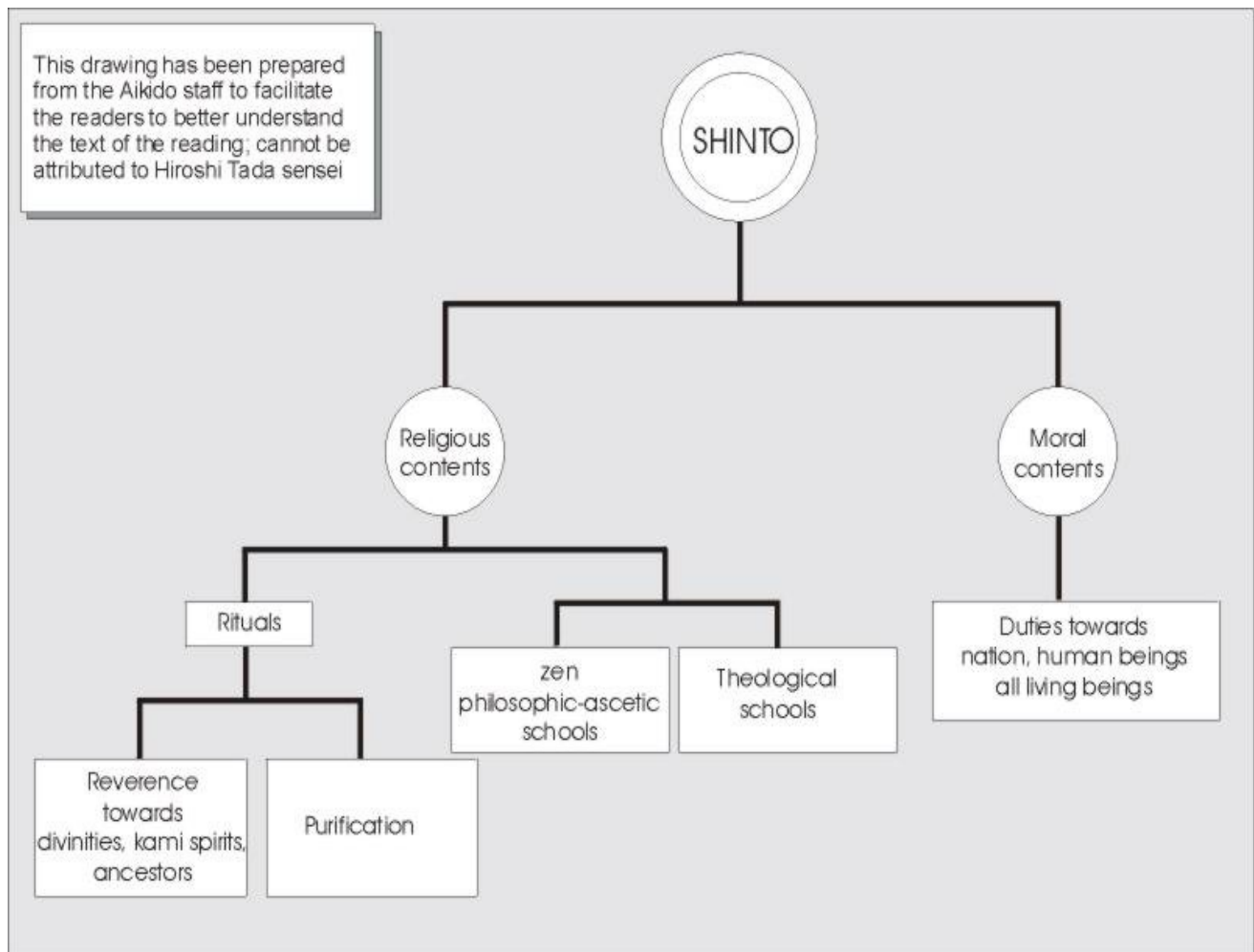
We shall now turn to a fundamental aspect of *pranayama* which has to do with the management of sensations and perceptions. In Sanskrit this is called *pratiyama*. Summing up what went before, we have mentioned: the principles, the precepts to be carefully observed, the firm and committed attitude one's spirit must conform to on such a path, the energy and the manner in which it is stored in the organism, and the training of the body in order that it follow the will of the spirit. All these elements are a part of the process which leads to being able to train in conformity with this second method we have treated. It is very difficult to attain absolute concentration without going through the entire procedure.

The method for achieving control of the spirit is nowadays also named vital-energy training. This is a burning issue and one of the most problematic of the twenty-first century. Why is it we go into such matters, why do we deem it necessary? Let us suppose this object is an illness [Tada Sensei points at the second element in the first sketch on the board]. How is it possible to fight and defeat an illness? This objective can be reached by overcoming the antagonism between spirit and object. Antagonism gives rise to rage, to a temperamental attitude, and this only induces a fall in the level of our energy. When the antagonism is overcome the spirit is calm and peaceful, and this brings on an improvement.

In a martial arts context the situation is identical. The utmost of our strength can only be attained when we have overcome antagonism. We have spoken in general terms of *Budo* and of martial arts, though it must be underlined that the same does not hold for all martial arts: Japan has seen the rise of high forms of martial art, but also of extremely low forms. The vast majority of individuals will have absolutely no notion of the things we have talked about. People, however, are free to choose. Ueshiba Sensei claimed that when we are able to put Aikido into practice in our daily lives, then we *are* Aikido. Breathing techniques, techniques for the control of sensory perception, techniques of spiritual control and that which we have for some time been calling *Kinorenma* are the fundamental techniques which lead to the second stage.

Bearing in mind the kind of training imparted in *Kinorenma*, it becomes clear that Aikido techniques cannot be put into practice only as a form of movement, as a

pass-time: that has nothing to do with these aims. If, instead, you wish to go deeper in the study of Aikido, and especially if you wish to understand the thinking of Ueshiba Sensei, you must turn to the topics mentioned during these two days. Without that you will not be able to improve at all, and you will simply stop there, without understanding.



To learn more:



[Biografia di Takeda Sokaku](#)
[Biografia di Nakamura Tempu](#)
[Biografia di Deguchi Onisaburo](#)



[Takeda: Daito-ryu site](#)
[Tempu: an article in Michi Online](#)
[Deguchi: Omoto-kyo site](#)